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VOLUME II: FROM THE  
RENAISSANCE TO THE PRESENT

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## I The Spirit of British Imperialism

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In 1872 the British statesman Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881) delivered a famous speech at the Crystal Palace in London that posed a crucial choice for his country: it was either insignificance in world affairs or imperial power with prosperity and global prestige. His speech was soon followed by an outburst of speeches, lectures, and books in which imperialists made claims for British worldwide superiority buttressed by arguments drawn from racist and Social Darwinist convictions popular at the time. Although public opinion was divided, these ideas, illustrated in the following three readings, found a receptive audience.

### Cecil Rhodes

#### *CONFESSION OF FAITH*

One ardent supporter of British expansion was Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902). Raised in a parsonage north of London, Rhodes went to southern Africa at the age of seventeen for his health and to join his brother. Within two years he had established himself in the diamond industry. In the 1870s, he divided his time between Africa and studying at Oxford University. While at Oxford he was inspired by Disraeli's Crystal Palace speech and the views of the prominent Oxford professor John Ruskin (1819–1900), who urged England "to found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, formed of the most energetic and worthiest of men." In this spirit Rhodes wrote, for his own satisfaction, a "Confession of Faith." Composed in 1877, when he was twenty-four years old, it offered a vision of racist expansionism popular before the First World War. It was not published in his lifetime.

His faith propelled him into political and financial prominence in South Africa. In 1889 he became head of the British South African Company, whose territory, twice as large as England, was named Rhodesia six years later (it was renamed Zimbabwe in 1980). He controlled 90 percent of the world's diamond production and a large share of South Africa's gold fields. Never regarding wealth as an end in itself—he endowed the Rhodes Scholarships at Oxford—he sought to extend British influence in East Africa and around the world.

In 1890 he was named prime minister of the British Cape Colony, where government forces were heavily involved in conflict with the original Dutch settlers, the Boers. Driven north by the British, the Boers had set up their own state. Rhodes died during the Boer War (1899–1902), which put the Boers under British rule.

Excerpts follow from the "Confession of Faith" of 1877, included in the appendix of John E. Flint's biography of Cecil Rhodes. Flint reproduced the document "in its original form without any editing of spelling or punctuation."

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It often strikes a man to inquire what is the chief good in life; to one the thought comes that it is a happy marriage, to another great wealth, and as each seizes on his idea, for that he more or less works for the rest of his existence. To myself thinking over the same question the wish came to render myself useful to my country. I then asked myself how could I and after reviewing the various methods I have felt that at the present day we are actually limiting our children and perhaps bringing into the world half the human beings we might owing to the lack of country for them to inhabit that if we had retained America there would at this moment be millions more of English living. I contend that we are the finest race in the world and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings what an alteration there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence, look again at the extra employment a new country added to our dominions gives. I contend that every acre added to our territory means in the future birth to some more of the English race who otherwise would not be brought into existence. Added to this the absorption of the greater portion of the world under our rule simply means the end of all wars. . . .

The idea gleaming and dancing before ones eyes like a will-of-the-wisp at last frames itself into a plan. Why should we not form a secret society with but one object the furtherance of the British Empire and the bringing of the whole uncivilised world under British rule for the recovery of the United States for the making the Anglo-Saxon race but one Empire. What a dream, but yet it is probable, it is possible. I once heard it argued by a fellow in my own college, I am sorry to own it by an Englishman, that it was a good thing for us that we have lost the United States. There are some subjects on which there can be no arguments, and to an Englishman this is one of them, but even from an American's point of view just pic-

ture what they have lost, look at their government, are not the frauds that yearly come before the public view a disgrace to any country and especially their's which is the finest in the world. Would they have occurred had they remained under English rule great as they have become how infinitely greater they would have been with the softening and elevating influences of English rule, think of those countless 000's [thousands] of Englishmen that during the last 100 years would have crossed the Atlantic and settled and populated the United States. Would they have not made without any prejudice a finer country of it than the low class Irish and German emigrants? All this we have lost and that country loses owing to whom? Owing to two or three ignorant pig-headed statesmen of the last century, at their door lies the blame. Do you ever feel mad? do you ever feel murderous. I think I do with those men. I bring facts to prove my assertion. Does an English father when his sons wish to emigrate ever think of suggesting emigration to a country under another flag, never—it would seem a disgrace to suggest such a thing I think that we all think that poverty is better under our own flag than wealth under a foreign one.

Put your mind into another train of thought. Fancy Australia discovered and colonised under the French flag. . . . We learn from having lost to cling to what we possess. We know the size of the world we know the total extent. Africa is still lying ready for us it is our duty to take it. It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race more of the best the most human, most honourable race the world possesses.

To forward such a scheme what a splendid help a secret society would be a society not openly acknowledged but who would work in secret for such an object.

I contend that there are at the present moment numbers of the ablest men in the world who would devote their whole lives to it. . . .

What has been the main cause of the success of the Romish Church? The fact that every enthusiast, call it if you like every madman finds employment in it. Let us form the same kind of society a Church for the extension of the British Empire. A society which should have its members in every part of the British Empire working with one object and one idea. . . .

(In every Colonial legislature the Society should attempt to have its members prepared at all times to vote or speak and advocate the closer union of England and the colonies, to crush all disloyalty and every movement for the severance of our Empire. The Society should inspire and even own portions of the

press for the press rules the mind of the people. The Society should always be searching for members who might by their position in the world by their energies or character forward the object but the ballot and test for admittance should be severe). . . .<sup>1</sup>

For fear that death might cut me off before the time for attempting its development I leave all my worldly goods in trust to S. G. Shippard and the Secretary for the Colonies at the time of my death to try to form such a Society with such an object.

<sup>1</sup>It is not clear why Rhodes placed this paragraph in parentheses.

## Joseph Chamberlain THE BRITISH EMPIRE: COLONIAL COMMERCE AND "THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN"

British imperialists like Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914) argued that the welfare of Britain depended upon the preservation and extension of the empire, for colonies fostered trade and served as a source of raw materials. In addition, Chamberlain asserted that the British Empire had a sacred duty to carry civilization, Christianity, and British law to the "backward" peoples of Africa and Asia. As a leading statesman, Chamberlain made many speeches, both in Parliament and before local political groups, that endorsed imperialist ventures. Excerpts from these speeches, later collected and published under the title *Foreign and Colonial Speeches* (1897), follow.

*June 10, 1896*

. . . The Empire, to parody a celebrated expression, is commerce. It was created by commerce, it is founded on commerce, and it could not exist a day without commerce. (Cheers). . . . The fact is history teaches us that no nation has ever achieved real greatness without the aid of commerce, and the greatness of no nation has survived the decay of its trade. Well, then, gentlemen, we have reason to be proud of our commerce and to be resolved to guard it from attack. (Cheers). . . .

*March 31, 1897*

. . . We have suffered much in this country from depression of trade. We know how many of our fellow-subjects are at this moment unemployed. Is there any man in his senses who believes that the crowded population of these islands could exist for a single day if we were to cut adrift from us the great dependencies which now look to us for protection and assistance, and which are the natural markets for our trade? (Cheers.) The area of the United Kingdom is only 120,000 miles; the area of the

British Empire is over 9,000,000 square miles, of which nearly 500,000 are to be found in the portion of Africa with which we have been dealing. If tomorrow it were possible, as some people apparently desire, to reduce by a stroke of the pen the British Empire to the dimensions of the United Kingdom, half at least of our population would be starved (cheers). . . .

January 22, 1894

We must look this matter in the face, and must recognise that in order that we may have more employment to give we must create more demand. (Hear, hear.) Give me the demand for more goods and then I will undertake to give plenty of employment in making the goods; and the only thing, in my opinion, that the Government can do in order to meet this great difficulty that we are considering, is so to arrange its policy that every inducement shall be given to the demand; that new markets shall be created, and that old markets shall be effectually developed. (Cheers.) . . . I am convinced that it is a necessity as well as a duty for us to uphold the dominion and empire which we now possess. (Loud cheers.) . . . I would never lose the hold which we now have over our great Indian dependency—(hear, hear)—by far the greatest and most valuable of all the customers we have or ever shall have in this country. For the same reasons I approve of the continued occupation of Egypt; and for the same reasons I have urged upon this Government, and upon previous Governments, the necessity for using every legitimate opportunity to extend our influence and control in that great African continent which is now being opened up to civilisation and to commerce; and, lastly, it is for the same reasons that I hold that our navy should be strengthened—(loud cheers)—until its supremacy is so assured that we cannot be shaken in any of the possessions which we hold or may hold hereafter.

Believe me, if in any one of the places to which I have referred any change took place which deprived us of that control and influence of which I have been speaking, the first to suffer would be the working-men of this country.

Then, indeed, we should see a distress which would not be temporary, but which would be chronic, and we should find that England was entirely unable to support the enormous population which is now maintained by the aid of her foreign trade. If the working-men of this country understand, as I believe they do—I am one of those who have had good reason through my life to rely upon their intelligence and shrewdness—if they understand their own interests, they will never lend any countenance to the doctrines of those politicians who never lose an opportunity of pouring contempt and abuse upon the brave Englishmen, who, even at this moment, in all parts of the world are carving out new dominions for Britain, and are opening up fresh markets for British commerce, and laying out fresh fields for British labour. (Applause.) . . .

March 31, 1897

. . . We feel now that our rule over these territories can only be justified if we can show that it adds to the happiness and prosperity of the people—(cheers)—and I maintain that our rule does, and has, brought security and peace and comparative prosperity to countries that never knew these blessings before. (Cheers.)

In carrying out this work of civilisation we are fulfilling what I believe to be our national mission, and we are finding scope for the exercise of those faculties and qualities which have made of us a great governing race. (Cheers.) I do not say that our success has been perfect in every case, I do not say that all our methods have been beyond reproach; but I do say that in almost every instance in which the rule of the Queen has been established and the great *Pax Britannica*<sup>1</sup> has been enforced, there has come with it greater security to life and property, and a material improvement in the condition of the bulk of the population. (Cheers.) No doubt, in the first instance, when these conquests have been made, there has been

<sup>1</sup>*Pax Britannica* means "British Peace" in the tradition of the *Pax Romana*—the peace, stability, and prosperity that characterized the Roman Empire at its height in the first two centuries A.D.

bloodshed, there has been loss of life among the native populations, loss of still more precious lives among those who have been sent out to bring these countries into some kind of disciplined order, but it must be remembered that this is the condition of the mission we have to fulfil. . . .

. . . You cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs; you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition, which for centuries have desolated the interior of Africa, without the use of force; but if you will fairly contrast the gain to humanity with the price which we are bound to pay for it, I think you may well rejoice in the result of such expeditions as those which have recently been conducted with such signal success—(cheers)—in Nyassaland, Ashanti, Benin, and Nupé [regions in

Africa]—expeditions which may have, and indeed have, cost valuable lives, but as to which we may rest assured that for one life lost a hundred will be gained, and the cause of civilisation and the prosperity of the people will in the long run be eminently advanced. (Cheers.) But no doubt such a state of things, such a mission as I have described, involve heavy responsibility. . . . and it is a gigantic task that we have undertaken when we have determined to wield the sceptre of empire. Great is the task, great is the responsibility, but great is the honour—(cheers); and I am convinced that the conscience and the spirit of the country will rise to the height of its obligations, and that we shall have the strength to fulfil the mission which our history and our national character have imposed upon us. (Cheers.)

## Karl Pearson

### SOCIAL DARWINISM: IMPERIALISM JUSTIFIED BY NATURE

In the last part of the nineteenth century, the spirit of expansionism was buttressed by application of Darwin's theory of evolution to human society. Theorists called Social Darwinists argued that nations and races, like the species of animals, were locked in a struggle for existence in which only the fittest survived and deserved to survive. British and American imperialists employed the language of Social Darwinism to promote and justify Anglo-Saxon expansion and domination of other peoples. Social Darwinist ideas spread to Germany, which was inspired by the examples of British and American expansion. In a lecture given in 1900 and titled "National Life from the Standpoint of Science," Karl Pearson (1857–1936), a British professor of mathematics, expressed the beliefs of Social Darwinists.

What I have said about bad stock seems to me to hold for the lower races of man. How many centuries, how many thousands of years, have the Kaffir [a tribe in southern Africa] or the negro held large districts in Africa undisturbed by the white man? Yet their intertribal struggles have not yet produced a civilization in the least comparable with the Aryan<sup>1</sup> [west-

ern European]. Educate and nurture them as you will, I do not believe that you will succeed in modifying the stock. History shows me one way, and one way only, in which a high state of civilization has been produced, namely, the struggle of race with race, and the survival of the physically and mentally fitter race. . . .

in the region from the Caspian Sea to the Hindu Kush Mountains. Around 2000 B.C., some Aryan-speaking people migrated to Europe and India. Nineteenth-century racialist thinkers held that Europeans, descendants of the ancient Aryans, were racially superior to other peoples.

<sup>1</sup>Most European languages derive from the Aryan language spoken by people who lived thousands of years ago

### 3 European Rule in Africa

Africa, the world's second largest continent after Asia, posed a special challenge to European imperialists who penetrated its tropical depths. While its territories north of the Sahara desert had long been integrated into Mediterranean and Mideastern life, in sub-Saharan Africa the Europeans encountered harrowing conditions as nowhere else in the world. They were repelled by the debilitating climate, impenetrable rainforests, deadly diseases, the great variety of black-skinned peoples and their strange customs. Seen through European eyes, Africans were illiterate heathen barbarians, still trading in helpless slaves among themselves and with Arabs, decades after Western countries had banned slave trading in Africa.

Cultural differences conditioned by African geography and climate constituted an immense divide between Europeans and Africans. The profound inequality in military and political power provided the sharpest contrast. Africans lived mostly in small communities divided by over one thousand languages; a few large states like Mali and Songai had grown up under Muslim influence but had collapsed by the sixteenth century. Cut off from developments in the Far East and western Europe that had long stimulated science, technology, and political power, sub-Saharan Africans, divided among themselves, helplessly faced the Europeans, who were equipped with superior weapons and backed up by powerful states. Inevitably, they fell victim to European imperialism. By the late nineteenth century Europeans had acquired sufficient resources, including medicines against tropical diseases, to explore the interior and establish their rule. Sub-Saharan Africa now became the focus of rivalry among England, France, and Germany; even the king of Belgium claimed a share in the much publicized "scramble for Africa."

At times the European conquerors proceeded with unrestrained brutality, proclaiming in the language of Social Darwinism that the "inferior" races of Africa had to be sacrificed to "progress."

#### Cecil Rhodes and Lo Bengula

#### "I HAD SIGNED AWAY THE MINERAL RIGHTS OF MY WHOLE COUNTRY"

A good example of how colonial expansion in Africa proceeded is furnished by Cecil Rhodes's dealings with Lo Bengula, king of Matabeleland, Mashonaland, and adjacent territories (now Zimbabwe). In his "Confession of Faith" of 1877 Rhodes had included hope for poor Africans: "just fancy those parts [of the world] that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings, what an alternative there would be if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon influence." Eleven years later, eager to expand his business, he arranged through three of his agents a contract with Lo Bengula, giving his agents "the complete and inclusive charge" of all the metals and minerals in the king's lands. In return, he pledged a financial subsidy and delivery of weapons. The illiterate Lo Bengula put his mark to the contract that follows.



Know all men by these presents, that whereas Charles Dunell Rudd, of Kimberley; Rochfort Maguire, of London; and Francis Robert Thompson, of Kimberley, have covenanted and agreed. . . . to pay me . . . the sum of one hundred pounds sterling, British currency, on the first day of every lunar month: and further, to deliver at my royal kraal [village] one thousand Martini-Henry breech-loading rifles, together with one hundred thousand rounds of suitable ball cartridges . . . and further to deliver on the Zambesi River a steamboat with guns suitable for defensive purposes, or in lieu of the said steamboat, should I [so] elect, to pay to me the sum of five hundred pounds sterling, British currency. On the execution of these presents, I, Lo Bengula, King of Matabeleland, Mashonaland, and other adjoining territories . . . do hereby grant and assign unto the said grantees . . . the complete and exclusive charge over all metals and minerals situated and contained in my kingdoms . . . together with full power to do all things that they may deem necessary to win and procure the same, and to hold, collect, and enjoy the profits and revenues, if any, derivable from the said metals and minerals, subject to the aforesaid payment; and whereas I have been much molested of late by divers persons seeking and desiring to obtain grants and concessions of land and mining rights in my territories, I do hereby authorize the said grantees . . . to exclude from my kingdom . . . all persons seeking land, metals, minerals, or mining rights therein, and I do hereby undertake to render them all such needful assistance as they may from time to time require for the exclusion of such persons, and to grant no concessions of land or mining rights . . . without their consent and concurrence. . . . This given under my hand this thirtieth day of October, in the year of our Lord 1888, at my royal kraal.

Lo Bengula X his mark  
C. D. Rudd  
Rochfort Maguire  
F. R. Thompson

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When the terms of the contract became known among Lo Bengula's subjects, they protested that their ruler had been tricked. After having his fears confirmed by friendly British missionaries, Lo Bengula executed his Head Counsellor and sent a mission to Queen Victoria. After an unsatisfactory response, he sent a formal protest on April 23, 1889. This pathetic appeal from the untutored African ruler had no effect on the course of events. He was told by the Queen's Advisor that it was "impossible for him to exclude white men." The Advisor said that the Queen had made inquiries as to the persons concerned and was satisfied that they "may be trusted to carry out the working for gold in the chief's country without molesting his people, or in any way interfering with their kraals, gardens [cultivated fields], or cattle." Thus Rhodes made Lo Bengula's territories his personal domain and part of the British Empire.

Following is Lo Bengula's futile appeal to Queen Victoria.

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Some time ago a party of men came to my country, the principal one appearing to be a man called Rudd. They asked me for a place to dig for gold, and said they would give me certain things for the right to do so. I told them to bring what they could give and I would show them what I would give. A document was written and presented to me for signature. I asked what it contained, and was told that in it were my words and the words of those men. I put my hand to it. About three months afterwards I heard from other sources that I had given by that document the right to all the minerals of my country. I called a meeting of my *Indunas* [counsellors], and also of the white men and demanded a copy of the document. It was proved to me that I had signed away the mineral rights of my whole country to Rudd and his friends. I have since had a meeting of my *Indunas* and they will not recognise the paper, as it contains neither my words nor the words of those who got it. . . . I write to you that you may know the truth about this thing.

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stop the charge, but they had no doubt faced horsemen many a time in the wars with Abyssinia. They were familiar with the ordeal of the charge. It was the kind of fighting they

thoroughly understood. Moreover, the fight was with equal weapons, for the British too fought with sword and lance as in the days of old.

## The Casement Report

### “WE ARE KILLED BY THE WORK YOU MAKE US DO”

The Congress of Berlin, 1884–1885, granted King Leopold I of Belgium the Congo as his private possession. The rubber exported from the Congo provided Leopold with huge profits, which he used for his personal pleasure and for beautifying Belgium. Reports from missionaries and travelers describing the brutalization of Africans by officials of the Congo Free State reached Britain and the United States with increasing frequency, arousing a storm of protest. In 1903 Roger Casement (1864–1916), British consul in the Congo, investigated the treatment of Africans by Leopold’s agents. Casement described how villagers were forced to do killing work in the forest in order to pay the rubber tax imposed on them by these agents. Based on interviews with brutalized fugitives from the rubber tax, the Casement Report, excerpted below, created an international furor, and in 1905 the Belgium Commission of Inquiry was established to investigate conditions in the Congo. In 1908 Leopold was forced to turn over his colonial domain to the Belgian government, which initiated more humane policies.

I asked, first, why they had left their homes, and had come to live in a strange far-off country among the K\*, where they owned nothing, and were little better than servitors. All, when this question was put, women as well, shouted out, “On account of the rubber tax levied by the Government posts.”

I asked particularly the names of the places whence they had come. They answered they were from V\*\*. Other L\* refugees here at N\* were W\*\*, others again were X\*\*, but all had fled from their homes for the same reason—it was the “rubber tax.”

I asked then how this tax was imposed. One of them, who had been hammering out an iron neck collar on my arrival, spoke first. He said:—

“I am N N. These other two beside me are

O O and P P, all of us Y\*\*. From our country each village had to take twenty loads of rubber. These loads were big: they were as big as this. . . .” (Producing an empty basket which came nearly up to the handle of my walking-stick.) “That was the first size. We had to fill that up, but as rubber got scarcer the white man reduced the amount. We had to take these loads in four times a-month.”

Q. “How much pay did you get for this?”

A. (Entire audience.) “We got no pay! We got nothing!”

And then N N, whom I asked, again said:—

“Our village got cloth and a little salt, but not the people who did the work. Our Chiefs eat up the cloth; the workers got nothing. The pay was a fathom of cloth and a little salt for

every big basket full, but it was given to the Chief, never to the men. It used to take ten days to get the twenty baskets of rubber—we were always in the forest and then when we were late we were killed. We had to go further and further into the forest to find the rubber vines, to go without food, and our women had to give up cultivating the fields and gardens. Then we starved. Wild beasts—the leopards—killed some of us when we were working away in the forest, and others got lost or died from exposure and starvation, and we begged the white man to leave us alone, saying we could get no more rubber, but the white men and their soldiers said: 'Go! You are only beasts yourselves, you are nyama (meat).' We tried, always going further into the forest, and when we failed and our rubber was short, the soldiers came to our towns and killed us. Many were shot, some had their ears cut off; others were tied up with ropes around their necks and bodies and taken away. The white men sometimes at the posts did not know of the bad things the soldiers did to us, but it was the white men who sent the soldiers to punish us for not bringing in enough rubber."

Here P P took up the tale from N N:—

"We said to the white men, 'We are not enough people now to do what you want us. Our country has not many people in it and we are dying fast. We are killed by the work you make us do, by the stoppage of our plantations, and the breaking up of our homes.' The white man looked at us and said: 'There are lots of people in Mputu'" (Europe, the white man's country). "If there are lots of people in the white man's country there must be many people in the black man's country.' The white man who said this was the chief white man at F F\*, his name was A B, he was a very bad man. Other white men of Bula Matadi who had been bad and wicked were B C, C D, and D E." "These had killed us often, and killed us by their own hands as well as by their soldiers. Some white men were good. These were E F, F G, G H, H I, I K, K L."

These ones told them to stay in their homes

and did not hunt and chase them as the others had done, but after what they had suffered they did not trust more any one's word, and they had fled from their country and were now going to stay here, far from their homes, in this country where there was no rubber.

Q. "How long is it since you left your homes, since the big trouble you speak of?"

A. "It lasted for three full seasons, and it is now four seasons since we fled and came into the K\* country."

Q. "How many days is it from N\* to your own country?"

A. "Six days of quick marching. We fled because we could not endure the things done to us. Our Chiefs were hanged, and we were killed and starved and worked beyond endurance to get rubber."

Q. "How do you know it was the white men themselves who ordered these cruel things to be done to you? These things must have been done without the white man's knowledge by the black soldiers."

A. (P P): "The white men told their soldiers: 'You kill only women; you cannot kill men. You must prove that you kill men.' So then the soldiers when they killed us" (here he stopped and hesitated, and then pointing to the private parts of my bulldog—it was lying asleep at my feet), he said: "then they cut off those things and took them to the white men, who said: 'It is true, you have killed men.'"

Q. "You mean to tell me that any white man ordered your bodies to be mutilated like that, and those parts of you carried to him?"

P P, O O, and all (shouting): "Yes! many white men. D E did it."

Q. "You say this is true? Were many of you so treated after being shot?"

All (shouting out): "Nkoto! Nkoto!" (Very many! Very many!)

There was no doubt that these people were not inventing. Their vehemence, their flashing eyes, their excitement, was not simulated. Doubtless they exaggerated the numbers, but they were clearly telling what they knew and

loathed. I was told that they often became so furious at the recollection of what had been done to them that they lost control over themselves. One of the men before me was getting into this state now.

I asked whether L\* tribes were still running from their country, or whether they now stayed at home and worked voluntarily.

N N answered: "They cannot run away now—not easily; there are sentries in the country there between the Lake and this; besides, there are few people left."

P P said: "We heard that letters came to the white men to say that the people were to be well treated. We heard that these letters had been sent by the big white men in 'Mputu' (Europe); but our white men tore up these letters, laughing, saying: 'We are the "basango" and "banyanga" (fathers and mothers, *i.e.*, elders). Those who write to us are only "bana" (children).' Since we left our homes the white men have asked us to go home again. We have heard that they want us to go back, but we will not go. We are not warriors, and do not want to fight. We only want to live in peace with our wives and children, and so we stay here among the K\*, who are kind to us, and will not return to our homes."

Q. "Would you not like to go back to your homes? Would you not, in your hearts, all wish to return?"

A. (By many.) "We loved our country, but we will not trust ourselves to go back."

P P: "Go, you white men, with the steamer to I\*, and see what we have told you is true. Perhaps if other white men, who do not hate us, go there, Bula Matadi may stop from hating us, and we may be able to go home again."

I asked to be pointed out any refugees from other tribes, if there were such, and they brought forward a lad who was a X\*\*, and a man of the Z\*\*. These two, answering me, said there were many with them from their tribes who had fled from their country.

Went on about fifteen minutes to another L\* group of houses in the midst of the K\* town. Found here mostly W\*\*, an old Chief sitting in the open village Council-house with a Z\*\* man and two lads. An old woman soon came and joined, and another man. The woman began talking with much earnestness. She said the Government had worked them so hard they had had no time to tend their fields and gardens, and they had starved to death. Her children had died; her sons had been killed. The two men, as she spoke, muttered murmurs of assent.

The old Chief said: "We used to hunt elephants long ago, there were plenty in our forests, and we got much meat; but Bula Matadi killed the elephant hunters because they could not get rubber, and so we starved. We were sent out to get rubber, and when we came back with little rubber we were shot."

Q. "Who shot you?"

A. "The white men . . . sent their soldiers out to kill us."

Q. "How do you know it was the white man who sent the soldiers? It might be only these savage soldiers themselves."

A. "No, no. Sometimes we brought rubber into the white man's stations. We took rubber to D E's station, E E\*, and to F F\* and to . . . 's station. When it was not enough rubber the white man would put some of us in lines, one behind the other, and would shoot through all our bodies. Sometimes he would shoot us like that with his own hand; sometimes his soldiers would do it."

Q. "You mean to say you were killed in the Government posts themselves by the Government white men themselves, or under their eyes?"

A. (Emphatically.) "We were killed in the stations of the white men themselves. We were killed by the white man himself. We were shot before his eyes."

## Richard Meinertzhagen

### AN EMBATTLED COLONIAL OFFICER IN EAST AFRICA

Richard Meinertzhagen (1878–1967) was stationed as a young soldier in Kenya from 1902 to 1906, serving on the raw frontier of British imperialism. Living under great hardships in the African wilderness, exposed to poisoned arrows, his sensibilities outraged by the practices of people the colonial conquerors called “niggers” and “savages,” he participated in imposing British rule on the rebellious Nandi tribe. In his spare time he enjoyed shooting wild animals, while also appreciating as an ornithologist the exotic birds he observed. The entries in his diary reprinted below provide insight into the harrowing experiences and the anguish of an isolated young Englishman facing the strains of colonial service, where Western and indigenous ways clashed more sharply than anywhere else in the world.

*August 20, 1902*

News came in this evening that a policeman had been murdered by a village only a mile or so from the station, as a protest against the white men. . . . At midnight I sent a reliable native to the offending village to ascertain what was happening. He returned at 3 a.m. this morning, saying all the neighbouring villages had joined forces with the offending village and were at the moment conducting an orgy round the dead policeman's body, which had been badly mutilated. A council of war had been held by the natives and they had decided to march on Fort Hall at dawn. So we marched out of the station at 3.30 a.m., crossed the Mathyoia and reached our destination half an hour before dawn. The village had bonfires burning and the Wakikuyu were dancing round them in all their war-paint. It was really rather a weird sight. The alarm was given by a native who tried to break through our rather thin cordon. He refused to stop when challenged and was shot down. There was then a rush from the village into the surrounding bush, and we killed about 17 niggers. Two policemen and one of my men were killed. I narrowly escaped a spear

which whizzed past my head. Then the fun began. We at once burned the village and captured the sheep and goats. After that we systematically cleared the valley in which the village was situated, burned all the huts, and killed a few more niggers, who finally gave up the fight and cleared off, but not till 3 more of our men had been killed.

At 3 p.m. we returned to Fort Hall and told the chiefs who had assembled to meet us that they were to go out to the village at once, get into touch with the local chief, bring him in, and generally spread the news that our anger was by no means appeased. They returned just before dark with a deputation from the village, saying their chief was killed and they begged for mercy. McClean [a fellow official] fined them 50 head of cattle, at the same time intimating that half would be remitted if the murderers of the policeman were produced. This they promised to do tomorrow. We have told them that we are quite prepared to continue tomorrow what we began today, and I think they are impressed. Such nonsense as attacking the station is completely driven from their stupid heads. So order once more reigns in Kenya District.

September 8, 1902

I have performed a most unpleasant duty today. I made a night march to the village at the edge of forest where the white settler had been so brutally murdered the day before yesterday. Though the war drums were sounding throughout the night we reached the village without incident and surrounded it. By the light of fires we could see savages dancing in the village, and our guides assured me that they were dancing round the mutilated body of the white man.

I gave orders that every living thing except children should be killed without mercy. I hated the work and was anxious to get through with it. So soon as we could see to shoot we closed in. Several of the men tried to break out but were immediately shot. I then assaulted the place before any defence could be prepared. Every soul was either shot or bayoneted, and I am happy to say that no children were in the village. They, with the younger women, had already been removed by the villagers to the forest. We burned all the huts and razed the banana plantations to the ground.

In the open space in the centre of the village was a sight which horrified me—a naked white man pegged out on his back, mutilated and disembowelled, his body used as a latrine by all and sundry who passed by. We washed his corpse in a stream and buried him just outside the village. The whole of this affair took so short a time that the sun was barely up before we beat a retreat to our main camp.

My drastic action on this occasion haunted me for many years, and even now I am not sure whether I was right. My reason for killing all adults, including women, was that the latter had been the main instigators of not only the murder but the method of death, and it was the women who had befouled the corpse after death.

November 23, 1902

Meanwhile a Land Office under my friend Barton Wright has been started with a view to parcelling out land to settlers. Eliot thinks there

is a great future for East Africa, transforming it into a huge white farming and stock area. Perhaps that is correct, but sooner or later it must lead to a clash between black and white. I cannot see millions of educated Africans—as there will be in a hundred years' time—submitting tamely to white domination. After all, it is an African country, and they will demand domination. Then blood will be spilled, and I have little doubt about the eventual outcome.

January 12, 1904

The authorities give no help. The administrative officers, with few exceptions, seem to dislike their country being mapped by soldiers. In fact the soldier is not in favour in British East Africa. This is largely due to the low class of man who is appointed to administrative appointments. Few of them have had any education, and many of them do not pretend to be members of the educated class. One can neither read nor write. This is not surprising when one realises that no examination is required to enter the local Civil Service. Sir Clement Hill, who recently visited the colony on behalf of the Foreign Office, remarked that "so long as Civil Servants were enlisted from the gutter" we could not expect a high standard of administration. When such men are given unlimited power over uneducated and simple-minded natives it is not extraordinary that they should abuse their powers, suffer from megalomania and regard themselves as little tin gods.

February 19, 1904

Before this expedition started I issued an order to my company and to the Masai Levies [African soldiers in the pay of the British authorities] that if any man was guilty of killing women or children he would be shot. My men are mere savages in the laws and customs of war, and the Masai are bloodthirsty villains to whom the killing of women and children means nothing.

Today we had occasion to rush a small village in which some of the enemy were con-

cealed and from which they were firing arrows at the column. I quickly formed up 10 of my men and 30 Masai and rushed the place. The enemy ran, and we killed 4 of them. I formed up this party some 150 yards on the other side of the village before moving on, and then heard a woman shriek from the village, which I had presumed empty. I ran back to the village, where I saw two of my men and three Masai in the act of dragging a woman from a hut, and the body of a small boy on the ground, one of the Levies being in the act of withdrawing his spear from the little body. Another levy was leading a small girl by the hand and was about to knock her on the head with his knobkerrie [a short club with a knob at the end]. I yelled to him to stay his hand, but I suppose his blood was up, for he paid no attention to me and killed the child. Meanwhile one of my own men bayoneted the woman within 30 yards of me. Putting up my rifle I shot the man dead and then his companion, who I think contemplated having a pot shot at me. The Levies bolted, but I bagged them all three before they were clear of the village.

*July 27, 1904*

On reading through the first part of this record I am shocked by the account of taking human life and the constant slaughter of big game. I do not pretend to excuse it, but perhaps I may explain it. I have no belief in the sanctity of human life or in the dignity of the human race. Human life has never been sacred; nor has man, except in a few exceptional cases, been dignified. Moreover, in Kenya fifty years ago, when stationed with 100 soldiers amid an African population of some 300,000, in cases of emergency where local government was threatened we had to act, and act quickly. To do nothing in an emergency is to do something definitely wrong, and talking comes under the category of "nothing." There was no telegraph or telephone, no motor cars or wireless, and action was imperative for safety. Thank God there was no time or opportunity for talks, conferences and discussions.

I also regarded discipline in my company as paramount, more important when dealing with coloured troops than with one's own countrymen. What may appear to have been outrageous and cruel conduct on my part was an insistence on strict discipline—the obedience of orders. I have seen so many coloured troops rendered useless by inefficient discipline.

*September 15, 1905*

Living isolated in a savage country, rarely speaking my own language, and surrounded by a population whose civilisation is on a much lower plane than my own are conditions to which I have indeed grown accustomed, but which do not improve on acquaintance unless one lowers one's own plane to that of the savage, when perhaps one might be contented. Isolation from my family, whose formative effect has been considerable on my character, is dreary and might of itself account for unwholesome ideas and gloomy thoughts. I seem to have received a heavy sowing of unhappiness and depression, which seems to thrive in the isolated conditions which I now experience. . . .

Normally I am healthy-minded, but the worries and conditions of the past few months have been too much for me. All men are not affected in the same way. Others with greater strength of character than myself might suffer little from moral and intellectual starvation. To others, natural history or some object of unceasing pursuit is an effective barrier against complete isolation. But my experience shows me that it is but a small percentage of white men whose characters do not in one way or another undergo a subtle process of deterioration when they are compelled to live for any length of time among savage races and under such conditions as exist in tropical climates. It is hard to resist the savagery of Africa when one falls under its spell. One soon reverts to one's ancestral character, both mind and temperament becoming brutalised. I have seen so much of it out here and I have myself felt the magnetic power of the African climate draw-

ing me lower and lower to the level of a savage. This is a condition which is accentuated by worry or mental depression, and which has to be combated with all the force in one's power. My love of home and my family, the dread of being eventually overcome by savage Africa, the horror of losing one's veneer of western civilisation and cutting adrift from all one holds good—these are the forces which help me to fight the temptation to drift down to the temporary luxury of the civilisation of the savage.

March 17, 1906

My 5 years are up this year, and I must decide whether or not to revert to my regiment. I think I had better go back, for if I were to remain out here much longer I should get less and less anxious ever to go back to my British regiment, and that I know I would in the end regret. But I admit I am a bit tired of this sort of life. It is too solitary for any length of time. Niggers are rather getting on my nerves, the

climate is making me feel depressed, and altogether I feel I want a change. I want to be more with my own folk than with these savages. . . .

March 20, 1906

Natives are queer creatures and hold still queerer ideas. No European can fully understand the working of the black mind. Their morals, ideals and principles are all based on quite different models from ours, and it frequently happens that some trivial and unnoticed incident gives them an impression which the European would never discern.

It is hard to put oneself in their place, as I try to do. A white man is so essentially different in every respect, and unless one is master of their language, manners and customs, only attainable after many years' residence in their country, it is a risky boast to imagine that one understands them. By doing so one arrives at wrong conclusions, which is worse than having an empty mind on the subject.

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## GERMAN BRUTALITY IN SOUTHWEST AFRICA: EXTERMINATING THE HERERO

In the 1880s Germany gained control over what became German Southwest Africa (modern day Namibia). Hoping to profit from farming, cattle raising, and mining, Germans settled the new colony. The German settlers brutalized the native Herero people, exploiting their labor and flogging, murdering, and raping with impunity. "The missionary says that we are children of God like our white brothers," said a Herero to a German settler, "but just look at us. Dogs, slaves, worse than the baboons on the rocks. . . . That is how you treat us." In 1904, the Hereros attacked isolated German farms, torturing and killing settlers. Kaiser Wilhelm dispatched an army from Germany commanded by Lothar von Trotha to crush the rebellion. The German army drove the Hereros into the desert of Sandveld, beyond the colony's border and sealed off water holes; von Trotha then ordered his soldiers to kill Hereros, including women and children, still remaining on German territory, and German patrols in the desert made a sport of hunting down and killing Herero stragglers dying of